

Gus Heningburg Part I

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SPEAKERS

Robert Curvin, Gus Heningburg

Gus Heningburg 00:15

Okay, here comes my mother and father. And she was crying because they were late (?). My poor child, you know, the whole routine. And what I later learned happened, my father who had two PhDs, not one two forgot stuff, like switch the clock, when daylight savings time comes, that's why they were late. And I'm saying, "Okay, can we go upstairs and get in our car and go home?" And they said, "We don't have a car." And I'm saying to myself, "What the hell you mean, everybody has a car?" For God's sake. "We don't have a car." Well, how are we going to get wherever we live, we're gonna go downstairs and get on the subway. I had never heard of a subway, much less a train that runs under the ground. And we get on the subway train with all my luggage. And halfway up to 155th Street where we going, I got sick and threw up on the train just and had to get out on her knees with this newspaper and clean up and the people on the subway raising hell, I'm saying myself, I'm going back just to the south. This is insanity up here. We're gonna get out of this hole in the ground and gonna see little houses and and there were no houses. There were nothing but apartment buildings. And I'm looking up at these things, and I'm saying, "Where's our house?" And they point up in the air 409 H column (?) at 155th Street. And they were on the 19th floor. And all of this. I mean, I had literally Bob in Durham, North Carolina in Tuskegee, Alabama. I had never seen an apartment building. Live in one? Hotel. Yeah, apartment building. And they had brought my brother with them. So he was much younger than me. And so he came with them to New York. And, and I'm reconciled, this is where we live. And so we go in this building on the trolley car [I'm?] supposed to go step on the step at the back and that will open the back door, and the rest of them get on free. And I'm sitting there when the my little books and they're banging on the window, you know, and took me two weeks for you this went out. Finally, we moved to St. Albans because my mom and dad were no happier in an apartment building than I was. St. Alaban's yeah and I graduated from Jamaica High School. And as fast as I could get back to the south. The dean in Hampton, when I got there was Jenny Davis's father, Ray Brown wife's Jenny. And to show you how the colored world works down there, my father went to Grinnell on a Julius Rosenwald fellowship. The only other black student at Grinnell at the time, also on a Rosenwald fellowship was her father. And actually it's later I'm in Hampton, he's the dean. And I used to babysit over there and get free food

Robert Curvin 04:07

You used to babysit Jenny?

Gus Heningburg 04:10

Mm-hmm. And one of her one night, was sitting there with Dr. Davis. And he says, what would your reaction be if your father became president of Hampton? I said I would transfer and he was totally taken aback by this. Hampton was looking for a president. And daddy he was on the list. And I said, No, that's it won't work. I go back to my dormitory. I'm going into the building. We had one phone in the building by the front door. Payphone. And if you're coming in and the phone rings, whoever you answer, and then you yell, "Joe Blow this is your" you know. The phone rings, I answer, it's my father. And we chat. And he said, you "I don't know whether you've heard or not I'm being considered for being president of Hampton". I said, "I heard Dr. Davis just told me daddy I heard this about an hour ago." He said, "What's your reaction?" I said, "I'm gonna transfer". He said, "You don't have to do that, because I'm not going to accept it." And Dr. Davis had called him up. That's what happened. Because he didn't he thought somehow I would be overjoyed that my daddy would be the president. I cannot imagine. Sitting in science class, and the teacher knows my daddy is the president. Come on, y'all get serious here.

Robert Curvin 05:49

We're here this morning to interview a friend who I've known seems like all of my life. It hasn't been quite that long, but it's March 12 2008. And we're in the offices of Heningburg, who is the president and CEO of Heningburg Associates. We want to spend this morning mainly talking about Newark history. And particularly Gus's very prominent and distinguished role in the work of civil rights advocacy, employment, progress, politics, government service, in the city of Newark and the state and beyond. So let me start by just asking Gus to talk a little bit about how you got to Newark. And what were the circumstances that led you here? When I graduated from college, from Hampton, in 1950, I had taken ROTC, basic and advanced ROTC and got a commission as a Second Lieutenant, and immediately went on active duty. I served in the military for seven years, the last three of which were in the Army Counter Intelligence Corps. And I got assigned to Newark, while in the army working for the CIC, counter-intelligence corps. Newark was not in my life plan. But that's how I got here. And that was 1954, I believe, when I got assigned to Newark. I had just gotten back from three years overseas, and once I got assigned to Newark, I got began to get involved, and I was in civilian clothes. Though still on active duty. I began to get involved in Newark's inner workings and learned a lot about the people in the city. And at the end of my three year tour, I resigned my commission with no job and been in or around here ever since. So you were then residing in Newark?

Gus Heningburg 08:38

I was I lived on Seymour Avenue in Newark. And one bright day, I was advised that my good friend Alan Sagner, who was in Commissioner of Transportation for the State of New Jersey, was going to build a highway through my house. Route 78. That's why I had to move. No, my landlords house not my house. My landlords house. Yes.

Robert Curvin 09:06

Yeah, at some point you connected with the Urban coalition in Newark. When did the Coalition establish itself in Newark?

Gus Heningburg 09:18

It established itself in Newark and many other cities following the Riots. Many people don't realize that many people in New Jersey they think the only Riot we had was in Newark. There was 61 cities where there were Riots in the same timeframe. Newark was one of them. And a man named John Gardner, who had formerly been the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and so on came up with the idea of what we came to know as an Urban Coalition, some entity which brings all the pieces together to address the problems of our cities. And at that time, I was working for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. I was down in the Columbia, South Carolina airport, waiting to get a plane to come back to Newark. And I was paged. I went to the phone. And there were three people on the phone. Don McNaughton, who was then the CEO of Prudential insurance company, Jim Pauley, who was then the executive director of the Essex County Urban League, and Malcolm Talbot, who was then the Provost of Newark Rutgers. I knew all of them casually. And was a little confused as to what they were all doing on a phone call that was important enough to be find... tracking me down and paging me in an airport. And we chatted for a minute, and they said, this morning, we had a meeting and recreated something called the Newark Urban Coalition. And I'm sitting at the airport, looking at my watch and looking up here at the board to see when my plane is leaving. And I said, "Yes." And they said, "We want you to run it." And I said, "Wait a minute, you all I have a job. I like my job. I'm at work right this minute. So thank you, but no, thank you." And they persisted. And I'm finally I'm asking.. "Well, how many people have you got to run this thing?" "Nobody, you're the first person we talked to." "Oh, what is it supposed to do?" "Fix Newark." "And I said, Really? That's interesting. You have no money, no staff. But you want to fix Newark" and I said, "Listen, fellas, I have a job. I like my job. My plane is about to leave bye." Hung up the phone. Two hours later, I get off the plane at Newark Airport, the three of them are sitting at the gate and said, "You are not going home until you agree to take this job. We will raise the money. We will put the corporate will be sure the pieces the corporate community, the education community and so forth come together." All the things I had raised concerns about in that two hours between the phone call and the time I got to Newark. They haven't answered everything. And that was my I've never heard of an Urban Coalition at that point. But that is the history of how I got to be head of the Urban Coalition.

Robert Curvin 12:52

This was just post the 67 riots. That's correct. Now, the coalition then was formed, you became its first we president, executive director? Both. President and Executive Director. How did the coalition govern itself?

Gus Heningburg 13:18

We had a board of directors, which was put together primarily by McNaughton. And I had, as we negotiated, I said, "Well, if you're going to put business people, they gotta be CEOs. I don't want to Vice President for Community Relations that won't work." And McNaughton, as chairman of this new entity, basically selected the first board. And a third of them were corporate people. And every corporate person was a CEO. No middle management, corporate people at all, Bell Telephone, Public Service, Prudential etc, etc. CEOs. And uh...

Robert Curvin 14:02

Mutual Benefit? Mutual Benefit? Yeah. You could go right down broad speed, starting with Bell Telephone, and every major corporation from there down to the other end. The CEO sat on that board.

And the then Mayor was furious about this Addonizio. He was furious because he didn't like me. That was part of the problem. Had you had dealings with him previously?

Gus Heningburg 14:33

Not really. But I've been here through the Wilbur Parker issues and all that stuff. And so I knew I had Addonizio. In fact, Bob, he offered me a job once. Yes, he did. He wants to hire me. He said, "I'm gonna set up some kind of Community Relations Department in City Hall, and I want to hire you to run it." And I said, "No, thank you." But his theory which he expressed verbally, in many forms, to hire somebody who's going to get paid to run around and spend all day talking to the Italians and the Puerto Ricans and the Blacks and the business community and higher education. He's gonna run for mayor. I mean, he said that, and that's why he was even he wasn't opposed to me as a person. But creating this kind of a job is like, if you're going to be a politician, God made a job like this. He didn't know I have no interest then in between or now in elected office. However, he was smart enough at the very first breakfast McNaughton assembled to raise money. And I learned how they operate Bob, he had called every corporate person, he was inviting to their breakfast and told them how much their contribution was going to be. So this was all a done deal. But Addonizio came to the breakfast. And when they got around, they stopped having coffee and schmoozing and got around to business, about this new entity and what it was supposed to do. And we need X dollars. The first check, put on the table came from the Hugh A. Addonizio Civic Association.

Robert Curvin 16:32

He was already Mayor by then. He'd been the mayor a long time by then. Yeah. And but he was severely threatened not by me. But by the prospect of a job where you had all this corporate people sitting on there, that he clearly would have no control or influence over. But when he realized he couldn't stop it, but when McNaughton said, "Okay, it's time to write some checks." The first check on the table was Hugh Addonizio Civic Association? How did the coalition then define its mission of Newark? And what were what were some of the elements of that vision?

Gus Heningburg 17:18

The question assumes there was some logic to this. There was no, there was no logic. It was problem by problem by problem. And I'll give you a couple of examples. The city of Newark had no Department of Recreation. In its table of organization, there was no rec department. And much of what we did in those first few months, was to go around doing recreation related stuff at Georgia King Village and Stella Wright Homes and places where there were high concentrations of low income families. And we put on boxing matches, and we put on all kinds of activities because of the absence of any city plan for recreation. And we sort of felt that before we find a way to solve all those problems, the first thing we're gonna have to do is to give people something to do other than just live in Stella Wright Homes kind of thing. And and that culminated in something called the Love Festival that we put on and Weequahic Park at Addonizio opposed this thing vigorously. Because we were now not going to be in the projects showing movies at night, or bringing entertain(ment), we were going to the park where there would be thousands of people. And he really did not want that to happen. And it was very interesting his the way he intended to stop it was through the Black churches. In those days, Bob, the money, the the OEO money came into the cities through the local mayor. And then the local mayor distributed the food, you know, the food program, the senior citizen, the local mayor distributed the money, not Washington. So

he had extraordinary influence over the black churches in this town. And he went to all the preachers and he said, "Don't support this thing. It's going to be sex. It's going to be racial conflict it's going to be looking at the name of the thing is the Love Festival. And those preachers had to pay attention to Addonizio. I mean, he was the source of money for their senior citizen food program and there or whatever. But we were determined that we needed a big party. And Addonizio publicly announced, there will be no police, there will be no emergency services, there will be nothing out there, while he was telling the black churchman don't support this thing.

Robert Curvin 17:45

He was just afraid of the crowd, No, he was afraid of the political benefit that he assumed would accrue to me. It was just that simple. And it was simple in another way, if he really knew me, he would have known I am no political threat. I am not ever in this life, then or now interested in public office. But what he probably did know. And certainly what we all came to know was that you were a pretty important political strategist. And as I recall, those days, you were involved in many meetings and sessions, typically with the Black civil rights leadership and thinking about how to handle certain issues and problems. So how did that all happen? Did you see that, and did the business leadership see that as your, your role? The corporate leadership, basically responded to what I brought to them. They said, We don't know what the hell's going on here. So if he comes in and says we need to put up some money to have a great big party in park, that's what we would do. And but Addonizio did at when he was trying to block this party in the park, because he figured this is if he really needs a kickoff point to make the run for public office. This is it. This isn't Stella Wright Homes parking lot. This is Weequahic Park we talking about and but the thing just sort of grew and grew. And he announced publicly in the press, no police, no emergency services, no, nothing. Don't go out there. He said there'll be drugs and sex. Look at the name of the thing, the Love Festival. Well, and Bernice Bass, a name that you will certainly remember. Bernice went on every Sunday night, encouraging people to go to this party. And I remember one night, she said to the Black preachers, you all better stop opposing this, because you're gonna regret every time you try to block this Love Festival. And, and she loved doing this. As you know, Do you have any idea of how many people came out for these events? The newspaper reported 63,000 people showed up for an afternoon where the racetrack used to be in Weequahic Park. Now the preparation was contributed to the question you raised about all these different factions and sections. For example, we didn't use Weequahic Park, it was down and near where we all live, but we didn't go to the park. We didn't figure that was the only way folks use parks kind of thing. And, but I knew a lot of people would be driving. And we were gonna have hundreds of cars parked down there. And I'm figuring I gotta have some security, I cannot afford to have cars broken into. So and by this time, Bob, we had established a relationship with the Black Panthers, with the Young Lords with the advocacy groups in town and so on. And in the course of that, I discovered that the Black Panthers, and the Young Lords were having a little war with each other. And I invited them and I've gotten to know him all between my counterintelligence core activities and other... I'd gotten to know folks in a lot of places. And I will always remember the meeting I had with the Young Lords and the Black Panthers in my conference room. And I said, Alright, fellas, the first thing I want you to do is put your guns on the table. They were... they were wearing guns in those days. Yeah, we'll leave it like that. You know, they wore fatigues and they were you know, and a little sheepishly, two or three of them, in fact, put their guns on the table. And I said, fellas, I need some help. And you all are going to have to work together. To do this. I need security in the parking lot. I don't want a single car to be broken into, or damaged or

anything else. And it's going to be a huge party. And they agreed. And they provided the security out there in the parking lot. Then I ran around, looking for people to manage the tents, the welfare, and not welfare the the tent for people the first aid tent and the something something else tent. And then I realized, I don't have any tents I'm organizing all these people. We got Marian Kidd from the Welfare Rights Organization to agree the handle the Lost and Found tent. You know, we're bringing folks in to do it. But then after I got all these volunteers, I got guys being trained at Martland Hospital, where you call an interns to manage the first aide tent. And it was going around, you know, tent by tent by tent. And I still had enough contact with the military, that I went down to Fort Dix and borrowed a whole set of tents to put out there in Weequahic Park. Then the question became, we need some transportation, the CEO of Public Service was on the board of the Urban Coalition Ed Eberly(?). And if you recall, they used to run the bus service. What are now New Jersey transit buses used to be public service buses. So I went to Eberly? and said, Listen, I need buses, shuttling from around the city, go into the park. He said okay, how many do you need? Tell me where the pickups are, you know, the whole, but what the guy who's going to dispatch the buses needed to know. And never said no, never said this is expensive, never said we've never done this before. Heis only question was, and this was typical of the corporate responses in those days. You go in there and say we need x. And invariably, we got it. So among the places I assigned, put on the list for pickup points was every Black church that had been opposing putting this thing on and I gave him the list. He says, I see you got every Black church in town on this list. It was on a Sunday. The event was on a Sunday. And he said, alright, what time do you want the pickups, and they were just going to shuttle back and forth. What time you want pickups? And I said about 12:15 to start. We were gonna start the show in the park around two o'clock. But by the time people got there and settled down and so on. And he said, "Well, I see you waited until after the sermon." I said, No, I didn't. That's the time they pass the plate. That's the time I want the first bus sitting out there. I'm going to empty the churches. This is an important issue here. And sure enough, those buses started shuttling about 12:15 from every major Black church in town out to Weequahic Park and then back to pick up the next set of people. It was a marvelous example of what people in this town that had just been shooting at each other and killing each other were willing to do if you gave him something to do. At the end of the What was the entertainment agenda? It was a band with music, dancing, and hotdogs. And it was just a big party. I had to get the Black cops in New York through their black, the Guardians the black cops organization come over in uniform and provide security because he wouldn't let Newark policeman do it. And they didn't have anything to do. But I said I want you all in uniform. I want people to see that there's a policeman right over there. And there's a you know, that kind of thing. So here were the New York cops and we knew the folks in New York. The Welfare Rights Organization, the Young Lords, the Black Panthers, all out there together, working on this thing. Were Baraka's people organized by that time and were they involved in it? (Unitellgable?) was involved. Yes. The And they got to know each other, many of them for the first time out there. When the thing was over, and we were very careful, don't leave a piece of paper on the ground. We got trash cans out here, you know, when the thing was over one other area of cooperation. Weequahic Park is right underneath the approach to the east west landing runway at Newark Airport. All those light planes and they come right down if 200 feet off the ground when they go to Weequahic Park. And we had a band and we had microphones and we're saying how are we going to keep those planes from every 10 minutes? And the simplest answer is called the director of aviation at the airport. I didn't know who that was, but I figured about is in charge at a place called him up and said, Look, is it possible to do the vertical plane so they land on the north south runways the major runways for three hours? And they say sure what else you

want, just like that. So for four hours, no plane landed on an East West runway. Unless they came in from the New York side just don't come over Weequahic Park. The coalition transitioned in a way into many of the nitty gritty issues of employment. How did that happen? Could you talk a little bit about particularly the medical school construction? Well, let me let me add this one thing about the festival. The success of it gave us credibility. They pulled off something nobody believed could be done. That made everything else we chose to do. From that point on a lot easier. From the corporate community, the federal government community, the community community. Nobody had ever done anything like that. Now let me add one other dimension to illustrate corporate stuff. We focus so much time and energy in the beginning on recreation related things. Don MacNaughton,, and had no staff we had four people. I never had more than five people on the staff of the urban coalition. When MacNaughton, and them realized how important organized recreation was in a city as uptight as this one was at that time. He sent for a coalition, our presidential vice president, who was in Minneapolis, Minnesota, brought him back to Newark to be chairman of the Coalition's Recreation Committee. His name was Al DeRogatis, that's how Al got back to Newark. Former giants football player was a VP of something in for Prudential in Minneapolis. But it gives you an example of how committed the corporate people were to getting what we don't know what to fix. But if he comes in and then says, let's fix this, if it means bringing somebody in here full time to do it, then we're willing to do it. That night, and you will appreciate this. I'm on the way home, got the radio on Bernie Bass. She was gloating on the radio. I told you black preachers not to mess with him. And I'm saying to myself, Bernice, please stop. I gotta get louder with these guys tomorrow. Come on. But it made a big difference. The black churchmen realized how much was missing, and how quickly one could develop, quote, credibility, if you will, by doing something that the community desperately apparently needed and wanted. One other quick example. The county owns Weequahic Park, not the city. And we had to go to the county freeholders to get a permit to put this thing on in the park. And there was a lot of discussion about this. When they put out their annual report for that year, the theme of the annual report was A Time to Dare. That was their official explanation of why they made that commitment out there. When when we got close to the time when Ken Gibson was gonna run for election, the second time. You remember the stories when he was elected, it said first Black mayor of a major northeastern city, gets elected first time he runs, they forgot he had run in 1966. But the press wasn't here. So they didn't know that. And when when Ken was cranking up to run at Addonizio was still running around here fussing about, he was worried about me. Ken had run once against him and got beat. So he stopped focusing on Ken cause by this time, he's worried about what I'm going to do, which was sort of a mistake, for him. He could not believe that anybody who had as much access to everybody in town as I did, would not run for mayor.

Gus Heningburg 35:56

And, but he would complain to MacNaughton and then everything I would do that he has, that has some political potential implications, "See that he's running for mayor and you all are paying for it", kind of thing. And you know, well, that when Ken ran in 1970, had two things not happened between 66 when he ran the first time and lost. One was a riot. And two was Addonizio was on the way to jail, and everybody knew it. Now absent those two things, I'm not sure if Ken woulda been elected in 1970. But because the press never paid attention in 1966, they didn't even have that as a point of reference. But the the after aftermath of that election, demonstrated some real major issues and weaknesses, I think, to this extent, how we perceive what our elected officials are gonna do, be and do, I think is a major problem to this day. We somehow perceive that our elected officials are our automatic leaders.

Whether they do anything or not, but they are our leaders. And we have a set of expectations for them. That few if any of them could ever meet. That's the first part of the problem. We didn't quite know what is the role of a mayor. You will recall, and this came initially, from Amiri Baraka, City Hall has 4000 jobs, we get a black mayor elected will have control over 4000 jobs and created that expectation in the community. Well, three and a half thousand of those jobs were civil service. And the mayor really had nothing, no control on stuff like that. I can share other examples but that it makes the point what our expectations were of a mayor. And certainly we would transfer them to a black mayor if and when we got one was not. We know, we knew so little about how government works that we had expectations which no mayor black, white, green or purple could have met. And the other part of it was and this is not just true of Newark by the way, was is it City Hall's responsibility to get everybody a job who wants a job? And of course, that's not quite true either. Leaving out the civil service part. But if I get my friend elected, I'm gonna be the, I'm gonna be the Chief of Police, I'm gonna be the you know that that routine. And it creates an ex... created an expectation in the minority communities Black and Hispanic. That all we need is a black mayor. And then we got we're home free. Well, that's not quite what the reality is. And that's not just a Newark phenomenon, by the way that's happened in in many other places. But when we fail to do that, the black mayor fails to get 4000 jobs for black folks. We began to say he's the wrong person. He's not committed to us, you know, his his credibility begins to erode right away.

Robert Curvin 40:06

But still there is a lot of power and authority in the role of the Mayor. And Ken has had four terms to work at it. Were there any significant accomplishments that he was able to achieve, despite these inflated expectations that people had about what he could do? I think, well, it was certainly one, which may be negative in the sense of its benefit to the city. He, it became clear that he was not going to be steamrolled by everybody saying, I want my grandmother be a crossing guard. And I want, you know, the police chief to be my neighbor, you know, that kind of stuff. And that might be considered a criticism of him that he didn't put Black folks in all of these key jobs. The other part of it was, we didn't quite understand what a mayor can and cannot do. He did not. He did not nor did the community. Our expectations for what the mayor could do if once we got a Black mayor, when so far beyond what a man of any color, size or shape could do. And it created a level of disappointment fairly early in the game in the community about well, we elected him mayor, and he hasn't done all the things that we were led to believe a Mayor can do. And there wasn't much he could do about that, him or his successors for that night here or anywhere else. It's not a new phenomenon. But in the, in the post-1967 riot atmosphere of the city, the the perceptions of the city, even within the city, were very down. And the challenge was to create some kind of economic social movement to try to overcome this fear. How do you think he handled that? Well, I don't think he handled it very well. Because I'm not sure the Mayor, whoever the mayor happens to be is the right person to take that task on. But we expected him to do it. And that would have been true, if it had been somebody else. It wasn't that wasn't just a Ken Gibson phenomenon. Anybody who became the first black mayor of Newark, was going to be burdened, burdened with that same set of expectations. It goes to the fundamental perception even to this day, that we Black folks have for our elected officials, not just in Newark. We perceive the black elected official is our leader, not our servant, we forget that we put him there. And then but then we back off, and leave it to him to fix everything. Whether it's Detroit, whether Chicago, whether it's Los Angeles, it's not a Newark phenomenon, and the human and financial and political resources that

would be necessary to make that magical, dramatic change, don't exist, didn't then and don't now. Sure, there's patronage sure the mayor can do some things, but we had expectations for the Mayor, far beyond his...whether it was Ken, anybody else, in that first role He couldn't do this by himself. But what he can do is to create a coalition of forces that do have more economic, political power that he has, particularly in the business community, the Mayor's relationship with the business community and how he serves as a facilitator. Seems to me to be even more critical than what he does down in City Hall. How'd he deal with that?

Gus Henningburg 44:50

Well, to some degree, I agree with that assessment, but to some degree, we were the problem. We had the Urban Coalition. We had more contact on a day to day basis and influence with the CEOs of all these big companies than the mayor did. And I didn't realize that as a negative at the time. In fact, it was a negative. It was a negative in the sense that the corporate leadership, and again, I have to emphasize Bob, I don't mean this, the Vice President for Community Relations, I'm talking about the CEOs. The entity which they chose to exercise, whatever resources and power and influence they had, was the Urban Coalition. It wasn't the mayor. That didn't mean that they were opposed to Ken Gibson, being elected, they supported financially supported his election in 1960 (1970). And I'll share one quick story to illustrate the point. I won't name the Bank president. But I went to the bank president and said, "Ken Gibson needs some money. He's broke." This was five weeks before the election. And I remember the campaign headquarters over there on Broad Street. They had a mailing stack of postcards made up you know the mail, vote for something, something. They didn't have enough money to mail the postcards. I mean, they were broke. It wasn't close to broke, it wasn't. They were broke. And there wasn't the time or the energy to go organize a big fundraising event, you know. So I went to one of the bank CEOs and said, "Listen, you all want him to be the Mayor. He needs some money." I know you want him to be the mayor, you complained to me about Addonizio so long. Now, here's some you can do about it. And of course, they gave me the speech about you know, "We're regulated by the government, we can contribute to political", stuff like that. And I said, "Are you finished? Now let me start over again. You want him to be the mayor, he needs some money, and you all better cough it up." He said, "Okay, here's the plan." Now, he knew this before I went in there, what the plan was when they got confronted with it. He says, "How much are you talking about?" I think it was \$20,000 or something like that. I said, "Okay. I want ten co-signers for \$2,000 a piece on this piece of paper. And I want people who can pay \$2,000 back if necessary. And then we can make the loan. So when the federal bank regulators come in here, they will see there were credit-worthy people who signed for this money." Well all the mayor and his his people realized is that I walk in there with a \$20,000 check, it took two hours or three hours. But the degree to which they communicated with each other, they the CEOs was probably one of the most important learning experiences of my life, to see what they could do when they decided to do it. It was also clear, they didn't quite know how to figure out what they should be doing. There was nobody in that chain of authority, who knew that putting on movies at Stella Wright Homes was a useful thing to do. They didn't know where Stella Wright Homes was, kind of thing. But once it was explained, this is important. The folks out in the street haven't got \$20,000. You want him to be the Mayor cough it up. I mean, that's shorthand for what went on. And there was several times along the way during the Urban Coalition days, where things like that when necessary. But you would never have read it in the paper. If you go back and look at the papers right now. You won't see the Prudential cost of X dollars or Bell Telephone or whatever.

Robert Curvin 49:28

Let me ask the obvious question, I guess. Why could you not have been a broker or intermediary for the mayor, and he never asked you to do that or he didn't see that as..? He never. He never asked me to do anything. I would go and say to him, I think I can do X. He would never disagree. He would say, "Fine." And just let me go off and do it. That was his personality that was... He was mayor of the city. Couldn't he have said, "Look, Gus, I've got to sit down with these guys and tell them what I really want and what my agenda is?" Or did he? Did he have an agenda? I'm not sure he had an agenda for them. I'm not sure he knew what kind of resources they had available to them. I didn't either. I didn't come in here with that knowledge. I learned it pretty quick. My office initially was right next door to Don MacNaughton's office at Prudential, I was able to sit there and watch the power, the influence? What they could do if they set their minds to do it. I didn't come to this job with that knowledge nor did he have it. I'm not sure he ever had it. And was he anxious to go confront? Or ask them for things that were beyond his ability to cause them to happen? Not that I'm aware of. And that's not peculiar to Newark by the way, I think that's we've been so far removed from the modus operandi of the corporate leadership in Detroit and Philadelphia, and Los Angeles and Chicago. And so we didn't know what they could do and what they couldn't do. We would see them at dinners and- It's hard for me to imagine a Maynard Jackson, or a Coleman Young, being passive about their power. I mean, in a sense, what we're talking about here, since we're talking about and is a Mayor who was essentially somewhat passive about his power, which may not have made a difference, but nevertheless, it was there. And what we're suggesting here is that he may not have wanted to exercise, or- I'm not- well, let me let me make an observation. And then I'll go into the detail. The integration of the workforces, and let's use construction to make the point is not a moral issue. It's a money issue. And if you approach it, getting jobs from an artist in the construction industry, as a moral issue, it's the right thing to do. You won't get anywhere. If you can't mess with the money, you won't make any progress. I wish it were more complicated than that. I wish I could write a doctoral dissertation. But it would be once sentence long. If you cannot mess with the money, nothing will happen. And we had begun to and I have to make one other observation Bob. Under MacNaughton's tenure as Chairman of the Coalition, he perceived his role to be to facilitate the things that I said were important. It wasn't the other way around. They wouldn't come to me and say, "This is what we think you ought to be doing." So when we decided to confront the construction issue, and it was over the building of Terminal B at Newark Airport, the when they were putting up the steel, all ironworkers, a couple hundred of them were out there and all you had to do was stand on the street and look. It wasn't a question of having insider information just go out there do they people go to work and count them. If I could stop you if I may to go back to 1963 in the Barringer demonstration, which was before the Coalition _____. The interesting thing is that nothing really happened as a result of that. There was this big demonstration, there was a confrontation work was stopped on a public project. The mayor put together the negotiators, he got the preachers to usurp the positions of the activists who had created the demonstration, but basically nothing happened. So now we fast forward to post-Riot (Unintelligable) that he knew quite what to do with them. I can assure you that Maynard didn't either. When he first got elected, neither to Coleman Young, I knew all of them. And one of the questions they were always wrestling with and when we would go to conferences and you know talking about stuff. "Well, where can we get this kind of resource from?" And you say, "Well, you can get this from Prudential." It had never occurred to them. Our, what's the word, our access to information, where it's Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, was so limited, we knew so little about

what resources the corporations could bring to the table, that we didn't quite know what to ask for. So you see this as a historical, more fundamental result of the separation of the Black communities from the workings of economic enterprise and businesses. So the separation really created this lack of understanding, lack of understanding, and the lack of courage to say, to walk in and say, "Okay, here's a problem. It's your problem, as well as it's mine, and I need \$50,000." Now, that's, that's not a Newark phenomenon. They didn't do that in Philadelphia. They didn't do that in Atlanta in the early days either. And all of a sudden, we had Urban Coalitions in 15, or 20, or 30 cities responding all to John Gardner's request. Each one was a bit different than the other. For example, in Detroit, the highest ranking Black guy at Michigan Bell Telephone, was brought over on leave of absence to run the Detroit Urban Coalition. That kind of thing happened in Philadelphia. In New York City, Eugene Calendar, black preacher, ran the New York Urban Coalition. So there was no rhyme or reason, though the business community was a critical piece of quote, the urban coalition philosophy and process the assumption that it or its leader would automatically know what power, resources, expertise you can demand of the corporate community because they didn't know what the corporate community did, or had. It's still true to some degree all these years later on. But there's another issue Bob it's the reverse to this degree. I spoke several months ago at the inaugural ball for the then newly elected mayor Plainfield and it was a black tie was a celebration, it was a party. This was eight or nine months ago, maybe maybe a year ago now. And at this very fancy thing. I said, "Folks, there's one thing I want to say to you find out very clearly what the authority and the power of the Mayor of Plainfield is. I don't mean this Mayor, the Mayor, whoever the Mayor is. For example, when your toilet gets stopped up, don't call the mayor. That's not what the mayor does." And all these dignified people were sitting there, they was like, "I don't believe I heard him say that." But it illustrates the point. I spent enough time in the Stella Wrights and the Georgia Kings of this town to know the toilet, you stop up the toilet call the Mayor's Office. The ice on the thing on your steps, not on the sidewalk out there on the street call the mayor's office. In other words many of the things we expect the mayor to do really should never get to the mayor's attention. Never. But we know he's the Mayor. He used to live down the street from me. And my toilet is stopped by. So you call the Mayor's Office. And the mayor's office in these cities Newark included would have a whole staff of people whose job it would be to go out and get the toilet unstopped. I'm sure there's some sociological explanation for that reality, but it is a reality. And to this day we don't quite know what the role of a Mayor should be, how much power and in what areas and how best to exercise it. To this day. What has tended to happen is being the Mayor, or the state senator or the congressman, has so much allure to it, that after we get elected, get them elected, we don't know what they're doing. We don't make any demands on them beyond our own toilet getting stopped up, but paving the streets and, you know, all the things that a government ought to do. I want to go back to Mayors later because we have two very interesting, successors to Kenneth Gibson. (Unintelligible) There was no legislation to back up the issue, which you all raised.

Gus Heningburg 1:00:42

It was goodwill. It was, this is a colored town, whatever. But there was no way to mess with the money. Stopping the job, didn't mess with anybody's wages, meant those few days a job was stopped, he didn't get paid because he didn't work. But it didn't cut off the money for the project. The chapter 127 state law chapter 127 1975 was written by Eldritch Hawkins then Assemblyman Eldritch Hawkins, and the Assemblyman from from Newark. I'll think of his name in a minute -- Owens, Ronnie Owens. And it was basically saying, in 50, well written pages on all publicly financed construction in the state of New

Jersey, there will be minority participation. That's what it said in that many pages. Howard Woodson was the Speaker of the Assembly. First, and only in our history, Black speaker of the assembly. But Ronnie and Eldritch showed me the document before they submitted it. And it didn't mess with the money. It was a statement of what it ought to be, there ought to be minority participation kind of thing. And in the original draft, they were going to house the implementation in the State Department of Civil Rights, you remember, we had a Department of Civil Rights at one point which had no power to do anything. And my suggestion to them was, again, on the you gotta, you gotta be able to mess with the money. You got to put the implementation of this in the treasurer's office, not on the Office of Civil Rights, and they rewrote it. The night of the Democratic caucus before that thing was gonna go up for a vote. Howard Woodson invited me down to the caucus, I've never been to one in Trenton, of all the members of the Assembly, black, white, purple, whatever. And they were going over the things they were going to vote on the next morning. And that was one of them. And Woodson, said, chapter 127, I want to hold that for last. So they went through this, there were discussions about every bill and he was able to say we're gonna pass or not pass. So he gets to this chapter 127. Now, it's been amended to say in the Department of Treasury, not in the Department of Civil Rights. And Woodson says to his colleagues, chapter 127, is very dear to me. And I want it passed unanimously. And I want you all to understand that anybody who votes against this bill, you will never get a bill posted for a vote in the remainder of my tenure as the speaker of the assembly. Are there any questions? And I'm sitting there watching this. And there were no questions. Nobody said, "Whoa, I can't." I then began to see how you exercise power. And that's what he said, "You want anything passed." And in the remaining two years of my..however long he was going to be the speaker. You better vote for this. As an aside, I got a call early the next morning from a guy who identified himself as a member of the assembly, and who saw me sitting there that night. And he said, Mr. Heningburg, I got a problem. What's your problem? I'm a member of this. And I saw you there last night. And you heard what Reverend Woodson said. "Yes I did. It was an unusual experience for me to be a witness to that." He said, "But that's what my problem is. I'm a business agent of a union in Essex County. If I vote for this bill, I will lose my job. What should I do?" I said, "If I were you, I'd be sick. I would stay at home." But and it passed. The vote, if you go back and look at it was how many members 80? 79 for and one absent

Robert Curvin 1:00:42

In 63. and it ultimately passed the assembly of the Senate, but then got put in the treasurer's office is what what the bill said, and nothing happened. So I went to Senator Lipmann and we lived in the same building, then 555 Elizabeth Avenue. And I said, "Senator, this thing is sitting in the Treasurer's office and nothing is happening" And she said, "Okay, I'll set up a meeting with the Treasurer." And she did. And she and I rode with her, which was scary. One lesson I learned don't...when you ride and Wynona Lipman's Cadillac, you drive, don't let her drive, you drive. We went to Trenton and of course she was talking a mile a minute the whole way. We get to the meeting, and the guy had to meet with her, the then assistant Treasurer who was supposed to implement this bill. And her influence and power at that point was if she said she wanted a meeting, they had to show up, there wasn't any question about it. And so he comes in, I don't recall his name. And she says, "Listen to what he's got to say." So I'm going through this bill's been sitting on your desk for nine months, nothing has happened the first, you know, the whole thing. And he started giving me all the explanations about why they couldn't do it. And I really got angry, and basically said, "Then you obviously don't know anything about the construction industry. Number one", it is scary that you have the responsibility for implementing this bill. And you are not

going to cut off the money if they don't comply. That's very clear to me as I listen to you. And this was a Harvard trained lawyer, I remember that part cause he told me, "I interpret laws you don't." And he was furious. When we get back in the car. Coming back to Newark. I'll never forget this Bob, Wynona says, "Gus. Remind me never to set up a meeting with you and a white guy when you're angry." But it got it began to be implemented on all state funded construction activity. There were many cities where there was state funding going on. But there was no local pressure. So the developer or the contractor, whoever, never bothered to pay any attention to it. So the role what I'm defining here, there is a role in the community after the legislator, the mayor, the senator, that whatever it is, gets the bill passed. Shifting over for implementation is a whole nother dynamic and... How did this apply to the medical school because there were in medical school construction actually started prior to the legislation. The and this, again, illustrates the power of these these corporate people I'm talking about. A big chunk of the money came from what was in Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, I think is health and human services now. And the state of New Jersey was going to ask for \$10 million, I believe from HEW, for this medical school. The Governor and the Chancellor and Ralph Ralph Dungan and Governor Hughes were going to Washington to ask the secretary of HEW for a grant as they had given to the University of Michigan to wherever and asked me to go with him. Ralph and I went down on the plane together. Governor Hughes was in Washington, and we were to meet him at the secretary's office. Now, these stories that I'm sharing Bob may seem disjointed, but but I think they begin to illustrate how you get things done. With no marches with no demonstrations with no whatever. So Dungan and I sitting the the undersecretary comes in his name was Bennamin (?), as I recall it. Secretary was out somewhere. And Ralph had all of the information. We know HEW gave this to the University of Michigan and this that, you know, he had all stuff. And we are building a medical school in Newark and we need X. At which point the lady comes in and says to the undersecretary, the governor is here. So Governor Hughes comes in, Ralph gets up and goes to greet him at the door and hands him his notes, standard procedure, it's just you do it in the hall, most of the time. And governor sits down, Ralph goes back to his seat. And the governor starts looking at this, these notes that Ralph Dungan had just handed him. And he got through this first page of the notes. And he says to the Secretary, he said, You saw what just happened here, my staff person just gave me these notes. I'm not going to read this stuff. Talk to him, meaning me. And, and so I went through the drill of the tensions being created by this thing. And it was gonna be worse, because all those people who got moved are gonna move the shortest distance they can go from where they got moved from the record shows that I don't care what town it is. Their momma's down the street their church is over there. So they go. So they're going to be sitting around this thing. And for three or four years, watching all white construction workers come into town, and make a ton of money, building this medical school, where their little house used to be. And that's trouble. And there was some discussion back and forth. And he said, we have \$10 million, we HEW \$10 million that we have not spent, we're at the end of our fiscal year. And we don't get this money out of here, it's going to be deducted from our next year's budget. So you want this money, you got to do it, and you got to do it in a hurry. Make the application in a hurry. This whole meeting, Bob took an hour, maybe. If we had left out the little social comments between the governor and.. it would have taken 40 minutes, not an hour. And and I said to him, and the Governor and Dungan both agreed. Now you got to attach to this money, a requirement for minority participation. It's got to be part of the transfer of the money. And he wrote it down on a piece of paper. And I further said, and Mr. Secretary, you've got to assign somebody at HEW monitor this. You just can't write it down here and then everybody go off and do their thing. One, they got the money. Two, it, named a person

from HEW to oversee the implementation. A young Harvard trained lawyer whose name was Patricia King. She is now married to Roger Wilkins. She's now Patricia King Wilkins. As an aside, it created a problem because none of this was clear through the HEW regional office in New York. This money came directly to Newark with this mandate. And out of that mandate, requiring the unions are very smart, you know, they look up and say, uh-oh, we better find a way to pay attention to this. That's why there was so little resistance on the part of the unions on that big, highly visible project. And Patricia King was up here, either in Trenton or Newark, at least once a month, for a period of time while the building was going on. And it's amazing to me how many of the people who were intimately involved in that whole fight, never knew she was here. They never met her. They never knew. They just knew the unions were under some pressure to do this. Stan Bergen said, and we sued the unions. The other day, I was going through a pile of papers in here. And a number of lawsuits I filed against the union apprentice program, the Union this, that and the other thing. And it became clear that their apprentice programs were a major part of the problem. The Union apprentice programs, the only way you could get people in the Union was through those apprentice programs and I understood the logic of that quite aside from the racism, the logic was, if you're going to be a plumber, we're gonna have to train you, not because you're cute and colored (?) but we're gonna have to train you. But the rules for the apprentice program was such there was an age requirement there was, you know, all kinds of stuff like that. So we said, we'll create a training school. And Bergen said, Gus, there's a building over on the far end of this site. The Bell Telephone built many years ago was sitting there empty. And it'll be empty for two years before our project gets that far along that we have to take it down. That building became the first headquarters for the Newark construction trades training Corporation. And we had union workers to be the instructors, the older guys. And they loved it. It was like working for the bank. They came to work nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock, electrician, plumber, painter, everything. They didn't have to go work in the cold. They didn't have to sit in the h???. Did the Coalition run the sites?

Gus Heningburg 1:16:10

Well, yes and no, I mean, we created a separate entity. And the initial money, interestingly, came from the Victoria Foundation, and the Dodge foundation. Now there's nothing in the Dodge Foundation's history of philanthropy to explain that. They do all kinds of things, but advocacy about construction unions ain't one of them.

Robert Curvin 1:16:32

But Victoria's...

Gus Heningburg 1:16:33

Victoria, that was quite normal for them. But that's where the original money came from. Then Governor Byre agreed, and his, this was his first term, to put some federal CITA (?) money into this training program. So this money came from those sources. The instructors came from the union, they got paid a salary. And that's how we began to get the guys into the Union apprentice programs.

Robert Curvin 1:17:05

I have to ask you, what role, you think the the agreements, the Medical School Agreements played in this? They played a major role. Nobody knew how it was gonna get implemented. There were lots of places where they had agreements of some kind, or another on minority participation. But very often,

there was no mechanism on the ground to implement it. And while we were focusing on the construction of the thing, at least, that provided a mechanism in this case, to get done, what HEW's piece of paper said was supposed to happen. That made it different from almost every other one or anywhere around the country, I know about where a local community says we want some minority participation. And we will figure out a way to make it work. So the agreements were very important. And then when when Bergen says, Here's a building that sort of closed the deal. Now was it that same building that was used for the development of apprentices for the airport jobs? No, only because as UMDNJ grew, that building finally had to go down. So we moved over to I forget the name of the street, where we were for several years. But here was the interesting political thing. When Brendan Byrne ran for reelection, he was in real trouble. The unions went to him and said, "Governor, we can provide and we'll provide for your reelection. Two things, money and manpower." See, a lot of folks can give money. Some other folks can provide manpower, the unions can provide both. On two conditions. Number one, you terminate the funding for the Newark construction trades, training, cooperation. And two, you don't replicate it in Atlantic City. The casino industry was just beginning to come out of the ground in Atlantic City. And I had been down there a couple of times at the invitation of some guys in Atlantic City and the unions all talk to each other. They know what's going on. We don't know what's going on all the time but they do --